

Application of Historical Linguistic Aspects for a Better Clarification of Complicated Pāli Terms

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The scientific study of a language, and its structure including the study of grammatical aspects, syntax, morphology and phonetics, is called linguistics. As far as the historical linguistics is concerned, it is the study of history and development of language which is conducive to study the causes of language changes. Furthermore, philology, morphology, syntax, semantics ...etc are the branches of the linguistic subject. Historical linguistics is helpful to gain lexical word-meanings of a language. Specially, it is very important to have a sufficient phonological understanding in Pali for gaining substantial knowledge on Buddhist studies. Although some educated ones in Pali accept the superficial meaning of the complicated Pali terms without applying them to linguistic methods, a considerable number of Buddhist scholars whose priority is given to study Buddhism with special reference to commentaries, Pali and Sanskrit dictionaries and linguistics can be seen. To understand properly, 'what the Buddha said and what the Buddha wanted to intend, one should be aware of both semantics and pragmatics.' Understanding the meaning of a word without knowing the semantics and pragmatics is meaningless and not useful. On the other hand, no one can put arbitrary interpretations in academic studies. When a line of pali stanza of Dhammapada is scrutinized, various interpretations (semantics) without paying attention to pragmatics can be seen. For instance, "Dhammapīti sukham seti....." Here, the meaning of the word "pīti" is joy or pleasure according to word level meaning (semantics). But in the context of the pragmatics, the meaning of the word Dhammapiti, is one who drinks the Dhamma. Therefore, an exact ending of a word-meaning is drawn and that word is to be linguistically scrutinized considering the parallels, lexicons, commentaries, neighboring contexts and correspondings. Therefore, in this brief paper, an attempt has been made to compare few Pāli terms in 'Brahmajāla Sutta' in Dīgha Nikāya which have been differently mentioned in the Buddha Jayanti Tipitaka version and Burmese Tipitaka version, in order to make some clear understanding of exact usages of those words based on philology and parallels, lexicons, commentaries, neighboring contexts and correspondings.

Key Words: Historical Linguistics, Pali, Philology, Accuracy of Words